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tactics Volume 7

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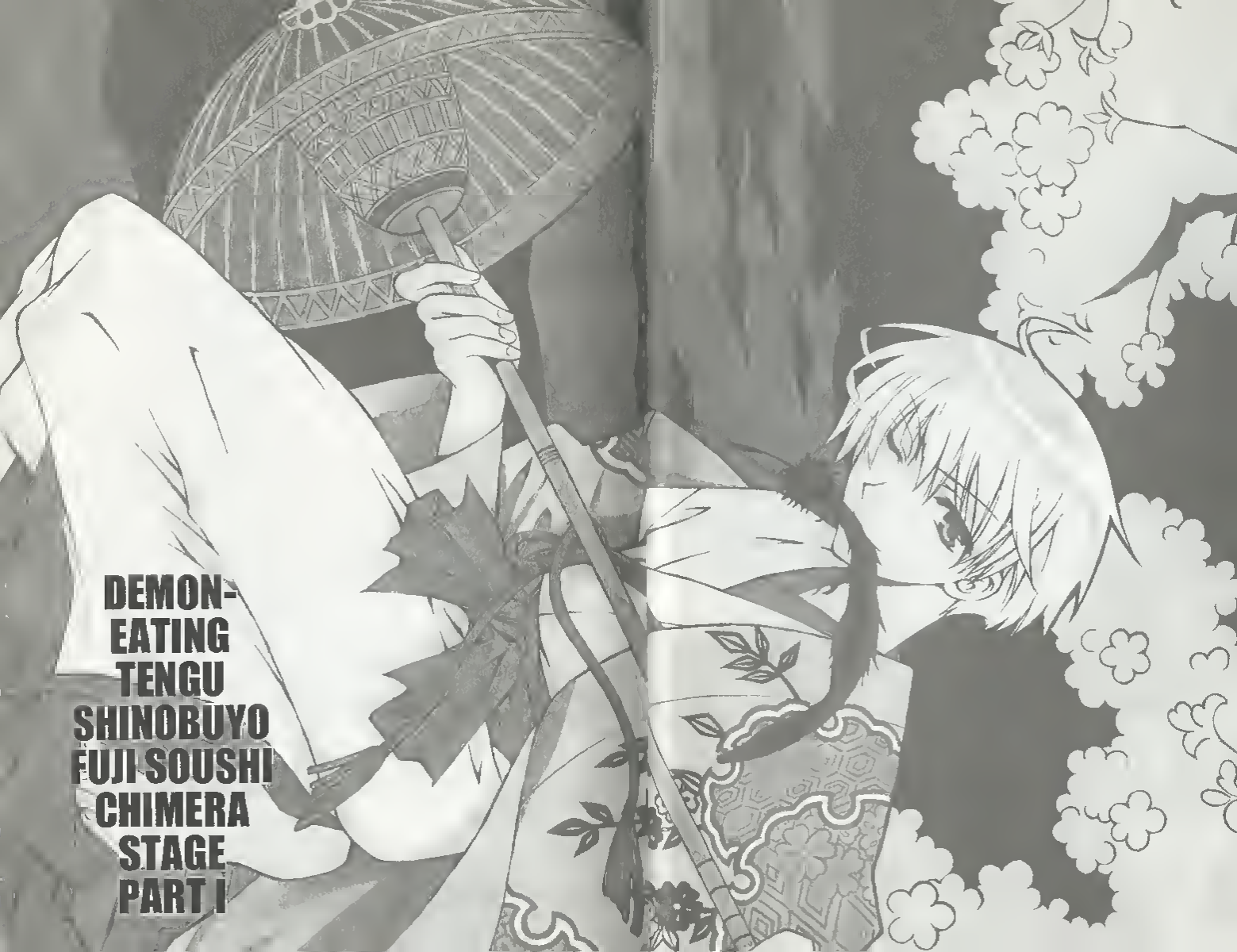
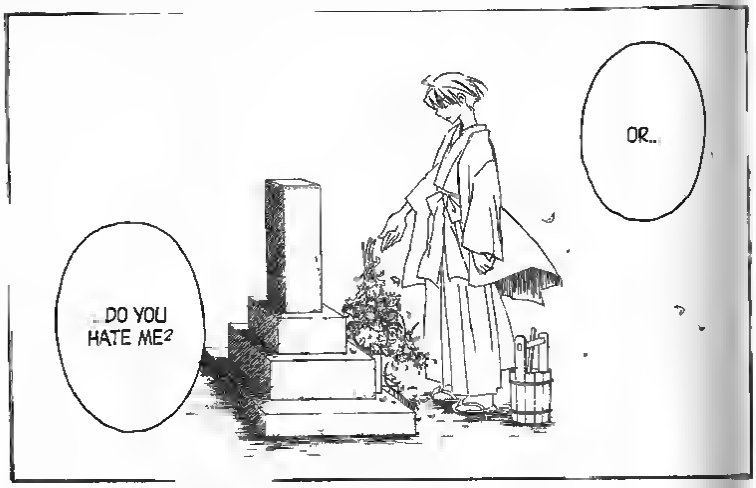

DEMON-
EATING
TENGU
SHINOBUYO
FUJI SOUSHI
CHIMERA
STAGE
PART I



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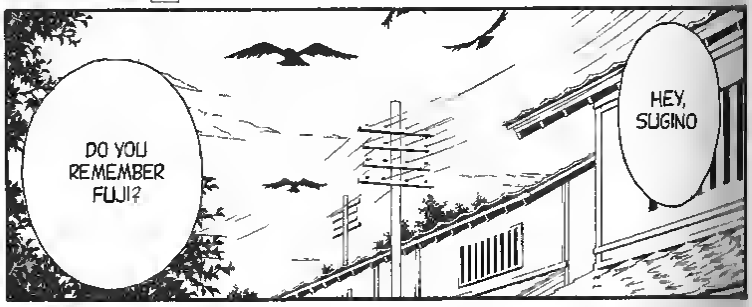
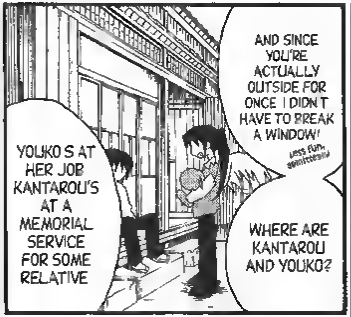
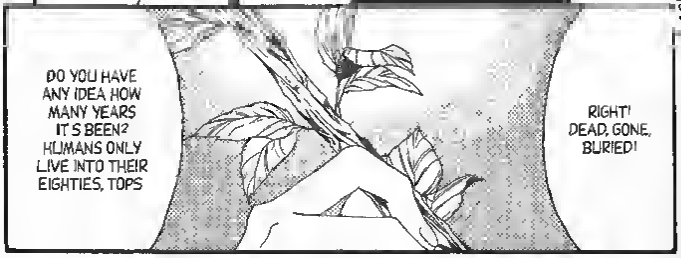

DO YOU REMEMBER FUJI?
HEY, SUGINO


YOUKO'S AT HER JOB KANTAROU'S AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR SOME RELATIVE
AND SINCE YOU'RE ACTUALLY OUTSIDE FOR ONCE I DIDN'T HAVE TO BREAK A WINDOW!
(KISS FUYU, SWEETHEART)
WHERE ARE KANTAROU AND YOUKO?

I CAME TO HANG.
MUU-!

HUNH...
!
WAIT A MINUTE.

.....
DEAD...
LISTEN I WAS SO BUSY LOOKING FOR YOU, I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO THINK ABOUT HER, OKAY?
BESIDES, SHE WAS HUMAN--SHE'S SURE TO BE DEAD BY NOW. JUST LET THE DAMN THING GO.
WHAT HAPPENED TO FUJI AFTER I WAS SEALED?
SAY, I'M STARVED. FOOD TIME!
DID YOU NOT JUST HEAR THE WORDS "FOOD" AND "TIME"?!


DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MANY YEARS IT'S BEEN? HUMANS ONLY LIVE INTO THEIR EIGHTIES, TOPS
RIGHT! DEAD, GONE, BURIED!

SOMETHING HAPPENED, DIDN'T IT?

tactics

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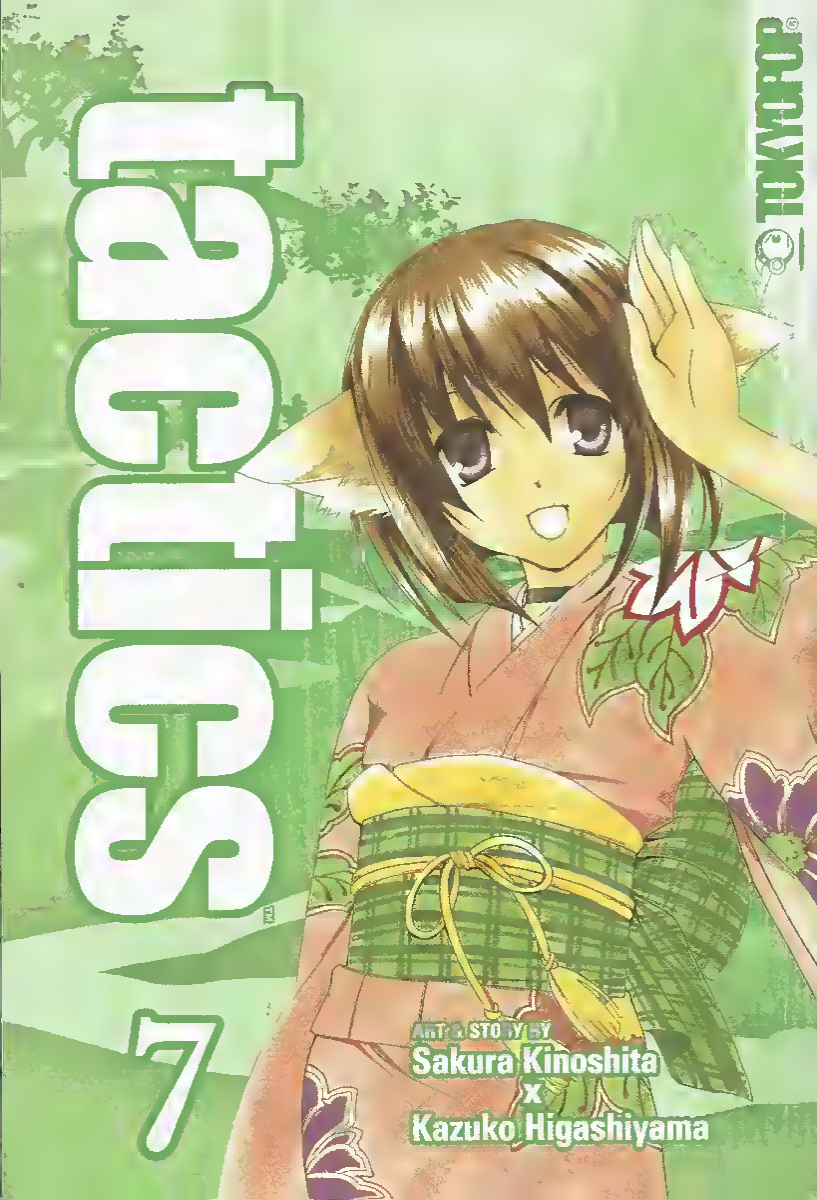


ART & STORY BY

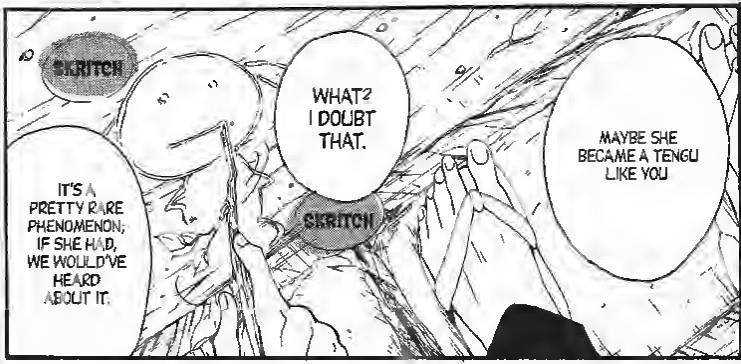
Sakura Kinoshita

x

Kazuko Higashiyama

TOKYOPOP

...YOU JUST SAID I SHOULD LEAVE THE ISSUE BEHIND ME.
HEY.
HAVE YOU TOLD KANTAROU ABOUT HER?
.....
IT'S NOT LIKE YOU'VE GOT AN OBLIGATION TO TELL A HUMAN WHAT YOU'VE BEEN THROUGH, ANYWAY.
AND I WAS RIGHT!
SUGINO...
SO I GUESS YOU DO REMEMBER SOME OF YOUR PAST, DEMON EATER.
MAN, I HATED THAT WOMAN.
AS MUCH AS I'M LOATHE TO ADMIT THIS, I PREFER KANTAROU TO THAT WITCH.
ERP!


SKRITCH
WHAT? I DOUBT THAT.
SKRITCH
MAYBE SHE BECAME A TENGU LIKE YOU
IT'S A PRETTY RARE PHENOMENON; IF SHE HAD, WE WOULD'VE HEARD ABOUT IT.

FALLING DOWN THE PATH OF THE TENGU IS ONLY FOR THE PRIESTS AND AUTHORITIES OF THE WORLD.
SHE DOESN'T EXACTLY FIT THAT PROFILE.
THEN.....

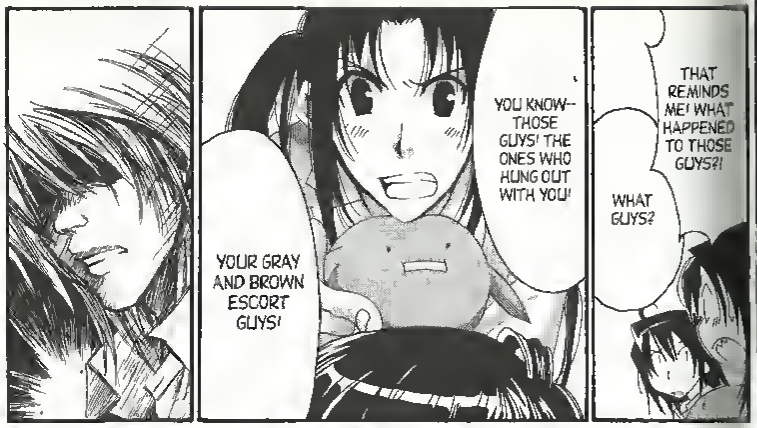
WHAT?!
DON'T BE A--
DON'T BE A WHAT?! I DON'T TRUST HUMANS, DEMON EATER, AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU!
I CAN JUST TELL BY YOUR FACE THAT YOU'RE STARTING TO CARE FOR KANTAROU!
NO, YOU DON'T! YOU DON'T GET IT AT ALL!

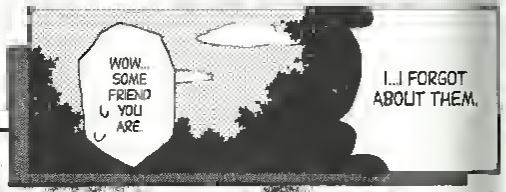
I USED TO BE HUMAN I KNOW WHAT I'M TALKING ABOUT.
WHAT AM I GONNA DO WITH YOU?
DAMMIT.... YOU YOUKAI-BORN YOUKAI ARE TOO TRUSTING FOR YOUR OWN GOOD.

MUU!
MUU!
MUU!
FINE.. I'M SORRY FOR RAISING MY VOICE, DEAREST.
M-MUU-CHAN?
MOOF!

I WON-DER...
I SAID I PREFER HIM! LIKE A FACE WOUND TO A CROTCH WOUND!
MAYBE KANTAROU'S JUST SPECIAL.
YOU KNOW . DIFFERENT FROM OTHER HUMANS

!
I..I KNOW.
PUT YOUR FEELINGS OUT THERE AND THEY'RE BOUND TO GET HURT.
WE'VE TALKED ABOUT THIS, DEMON EATER HUMANS AND YOUKAI DON'T MIX.


YOUR GRAY AND BROWN ESCORT GUYS!
YOU KNOW-- THOSE GUYS! THE ONES WHO HUNG OUT WITH YOU!
WHAT GUYS?
THAT REMINDS ME! WHAT HAPPENED TO THOSE GUYS?!


WOW... SOME FRIEND YOU ARE.
I...I FORGOT ABOUT THEM.

...SE EASE EASE SE...
OE ...

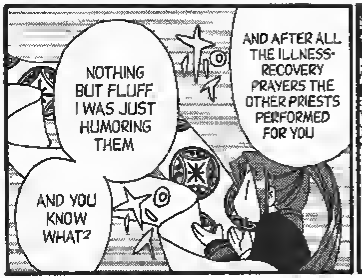
YOU STILL DON'T HAVE YOUR FULL MEMORIES FROM WHEN YOU WERE SEALED?

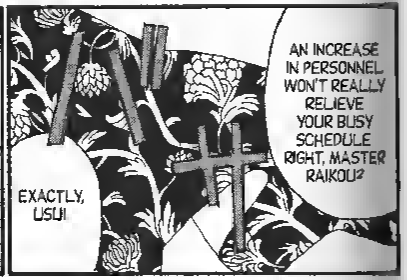
DEMON EATER

.....

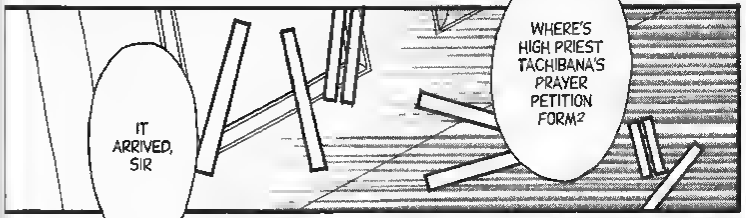
WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE ONE WHO SEALED YOU?
I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING FROM WHEN I WAS SEALED BUT THE ONE MEMORY I DO HAVE...
...IS OF THAT WOMAN BETRAYING ME.

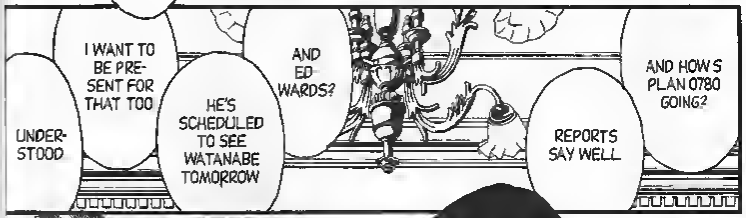
BETRAYING YOU?
WAIT A MINUTE!


AND AFTER ALL THE ILLNESS-RECOVERY PRAYERS THE OTHER PRIESTS PERFORMED FOR YOU
NOTHING BUT FLUFF I WAS JUST HUMORING THEM
AND YOU KNOW WHAT?


AN INCREASE IN PERSONNEL WON'T REALLY RELIEVE YOUR BUSY SCHEDULE RIGHT, MASTER RAIKOU?
EXACTLY, USUI

I SAY WE LET MEN LIKE THAT HEAL THEIR OWN "IMPURE" ILLNESSES THE ENTIRE THING IS SUCH A JOKE
THOSE WHO PRAY ARE THE FIRST TO TRY AND BAN PRAYING TO THE TABOO.
MASTER RAIKOU
EVEN THOUGH THEIR JOB ACTUALLY RELIES ON "IMPURITIES"
SHOULD BE QUIET WHEN OTHERS COULD BE LISTENING.

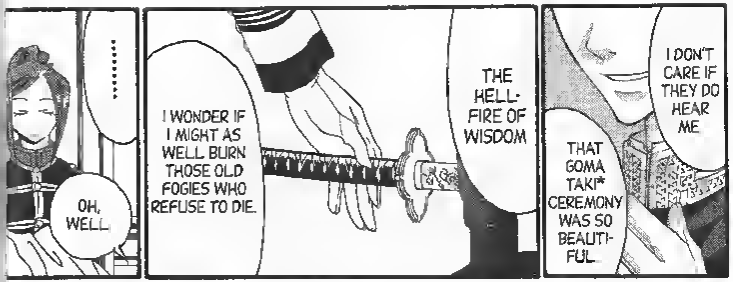

WHERE'S HIGH PRIEST TACHIBANA'S PRAYER PETITION FORM?
IT ARRIVED, SIR


AND HOW'S PLAN 0780 GOING?
REPORTS SAY WELL
AND EDWARDS?
I WANT TO BE PRESENT FOR THAT TOO
HE'S SCHEDULED TO SEE WATANABE TOMORROW
UNDERSTOOD

I THINK MY PLATE'S A LITTLE TOO FULL RIGHT NOW, USUI.
HOW S.....
WE HAVE BEEN ENCOURAGED BY THE ARMY'S HIGHER-UPS TO INCREASE PERSONNEL.
BESIDES...
EH. LETTING IN MORE USELESS LACKIES JUST MAKES FOR MORE HASSLE I STILL PREFER YOUKAI

WHEN I TOLD THEM HOW YOU HAVE MORE EXPERIENCE WITH THIS SORT OF THING, THEY ASKED ME TO INTRODUCE YOU
THIS IS OUT OF MY JURISDICTION I WOULDN'T BE HERE IF THEY HADN'T INSISTED
IT'S NOT LIKE YOUR TIGHT-ASS WAYS
I NEVER THOUGHT YOU'D TAKE A COMMISSION FOR A SIDE JOB LIKE THIS, HASUMI
IT LOOKS LIKE OUR GUEST IS RUNNING LATE.
YEAH?

I GUESS YOU COULD SAY THAT
HM? ICHINOMIYA, DID YOU JUST COME BACK FROM VISITING A GRAVE?
I SMELL INCENSE ON YOU.
THE ONE-EYED GOBLIN, HUH?
DON'T READ OVER MY SHOULDER!
I SWEAR, YOU'RE JUST AS JUVENILE AS YOU WERE IN SCHOOL!
BWAH!


.....
OH, WELL.
I WONDER IF I MIGHT AS WELL BURN THOSE OLD FOGIES WHO REFUSE TO DIE.
THE HELL-FIRE OF WISDOM
THAT GOMA TAKI* CEREMONY WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.
I DON'T CARE IF THEY DO HEAR ME.

*A tantric fire ritual that takes place on New Year's Eve in Japan

WELL, MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT
WHEN IT COMES TO YOUKAI, YOU ALWAYS LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO HASN'T CHANGED SINCE SCHOOL.
HE'S PRETTY ATTACHED TO YOU, ISN'T HE?
I'M GLAD I WAS NEVER DIRECTLY AFFILIATED WITH HIM, PERSONALLY.
I HEARD YOU MET WITH THAT ROYAL PAIN-IN-THE-ASS RAIKOU MINAMOTO EARLIER.
EVEN AS HIS TUTOR ALL I DID WAS READ HIM THE TEXTBOOKS AND ANSWER A FEW OF HIS QUESTIONS
I WOULDN'T GO SO FAR AS TO CALL HIM MY PUPIL.
I GUESS YOU HAVE TO MEET UP EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, SINCE HE WAS YOUR PUPIL.

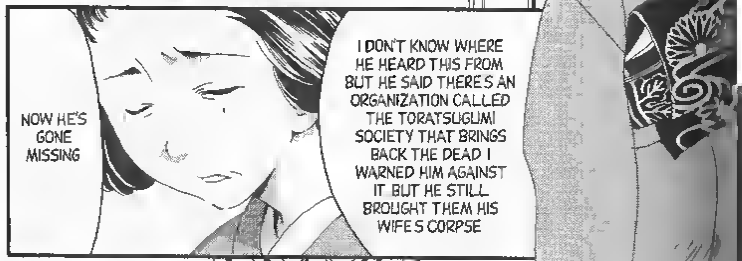
AND YOU STILL ENJOY AVOIDING QUESTIONS, I SEE
ANYWAY! DO YOU THINK THE ONE EYED GOBLINS AN EMBODIMENT OF A GOD TOO?
"IMPURE" LIKE THE TABOO OF THE DECEASED?
"DEATH," IN OTHER WORDS?
I CAN'T SAY I DO.
THEN THAT MEANS YOU ALSO THINK OF YOUKAI AS "IMPURE."
I DON'T LIKE THE TERM "FALLEN GOD," HASUMI, BUT YES--I'D SAY IT'S A CONVINCING ARGUMENT
YOU ALSO FOLLOW THE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT THAT CONSIDERS YOUKAI AS FALLEN GODS?
HASUMI...
WHAT?
YOU SEEM SUBDUED TODAY
HOW MATURE OF YOU. I WAS EXPECTING YOUR RESPONSE TO BE A SCREAMED NEGATIVE, POSSIBLY FOLLOWED BY ASH IN MY EYES

YOU'RE A THOROUGHLY UNPLEASANT MAN, ICHINOMIYA

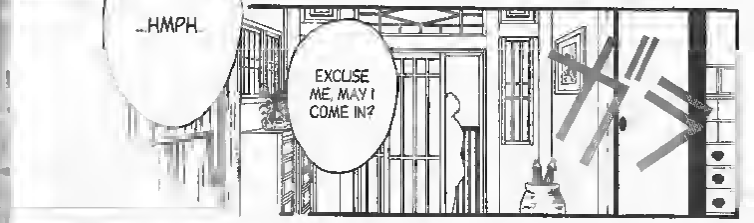
10月ニ
I STILL HAVEN'T PAID BACK THAT DEBT I OWE YOU, ICHINOMIYA
HAVE 12

NOT LONG AGO, MY SON LOST HIS NEW WIFE TO AN ILLNESS
HIS NAME IS KENSAKU

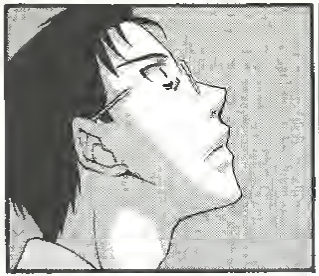
DON'T TRY TO PAY IT BACK SO EASILY, HASUMI.
IT'S WORTH MORE THAN THAT.
...HMPH.

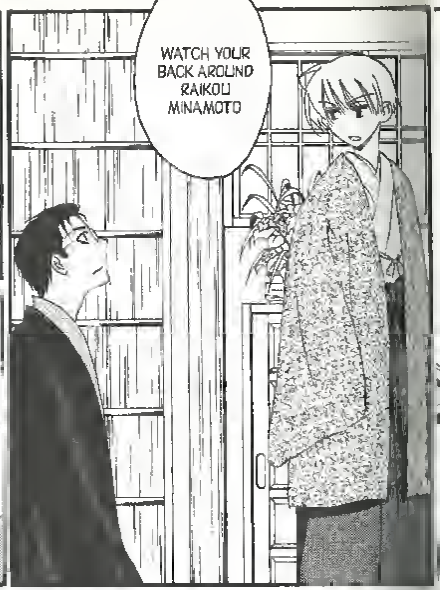

I DON'T KNOW WHERE HE HEARD THIS FROM BUT HE SAID THERE'S AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE TORATSUGUMI SOCIETY THAT BRINGS BACK THE DEAD I WARNED HIM AGAINST IT BUT HE STILL BROUGHT THEM HIS WIFE'S CORPSE
NOW HE'S GONE MISSING

I'VE NEVER HEARD OF SUCH AN ORGANIZATION. WHAT ABOUT YOU, ICHINOMIYA?
TORATSUGUMI...

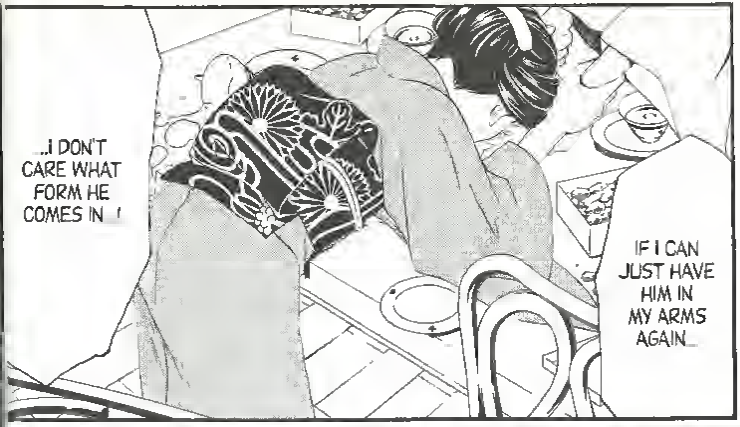

EXCUSE ME, MAY I COME IN?

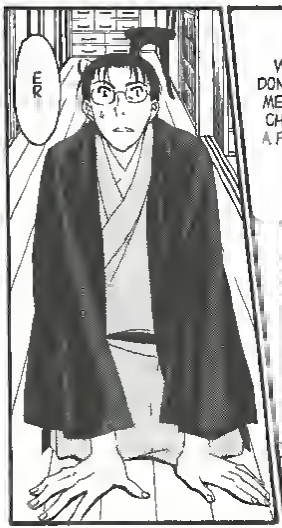
I DON'T ACTUALLY SPECIALIZE IN MISSING PEOPLE—
I DON'T CARE!
AND SINCE YOUR SON DISAPPEARED A MONTH AGO, AND THE POLICE ARE CONSIDERING HIM A RUNAWAY, YOU HAD TO HIRE AN INVESTIGATOR
THIS DOESN'T SOUND GOOD, ICHINOMIYA. I DON'T KNOW WHAT ELSE WE CAN DO.
YOU CAN TURN THE CASE DOWN IF YOU WANT.
MA'AM...
I'M BEGGING YOU, PLEASE! I WANT MY SON BACK!
I KNOW THAT THAT'S YOUR SPECIALTY, ICHINOMIYA-SENSEI!
I WON'T BELIEVE HE JUST RAN AWAY FROM ME! SOMETHING POSSESSED HIM--SOMETHING POSSESSED MY KENSAKU!
A DOLL?
DID IT SEEM LIKE THE DOLL HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH HIS DEAD WIFE?
YES.
NO--HE CAME BACK HOME AT ONE POINT.
HE WAS CARRYING A DOLL.
THEN THE LAST TIME YOU SAW KENSAKU, HE WAS CARRYING THE CORPSE?
THE CHIMERA, EH?
A FITTING NAME FOR A BIZARRE SOCIETY...
.....
AND HE GAVE THE DOLL THE SAME NAME AS HIS WIFE— HE EVEN SPENT THE WHOLE DAY TALKING TO IT
IT WAS SO STRANGE, SIR. A GROWN MAN PLAYING WITH A DOLL.
WELL, HE NO LONGER HAD HIS WIFE'S BODY WITH HIM
...BOTH HE AND THE DOLL WERE GONE.
I FINALLY DECIDED TO BRING KENSAKU TO A DOCTOR. BUT WHEN I WENT TO HIS ROOM...
DID YOU HEAR A VOICE?
OF COURSE NOT. NOT A WORD.
HE EVEN SAID... THE DOLL SPOKE TO HIM.




WATCH YOUR BACK AROUND RAIKOU MINAMOTO

YOU DON'T WANT TO SCREW UP A SECOND TIME, DO YOU?
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS, LET ME KNOW, ALL RIGHT?


...I DON'T CARE WHAT FORM HE COMES IN...!
IF I CAN JUST HAVE HIM IN MY ARMS AGAIN...

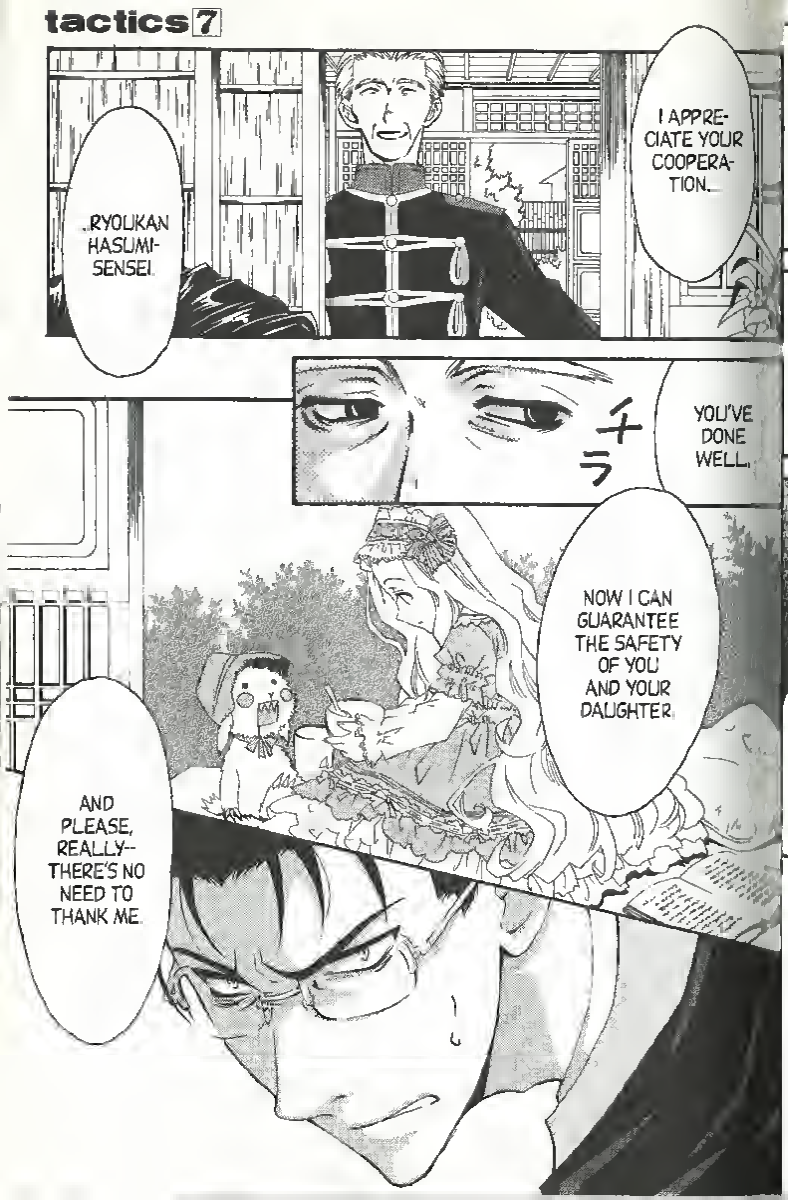

ER

WHAT? DON'T TELL ME YOU'RE CHARGING A FINDER'S FEE.
ICHINOMIYA!

SORRY FOR THE INTRUSION!
AND THANKS FOR THE NEW JOB

BY THE WAY, HASUMI...
I'D BETTER GO

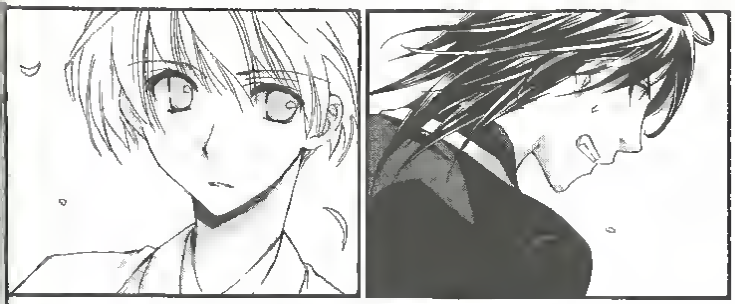
THAT POOR WOMAN.
YOU HAD SOME NERVE DISCUSSING THE FEE WITH HER WHILE SHE WAS IN THAT STATE!
Let's start with this much, shall we?
WHAT CAN I SAY? I'M A BRAVE MAN.
I DIDN'T MEAN IT AS A COMPLIMENT!
What's wrong with you?!
Hee hee!


..RYOUKAN HASUMI-SENSEI.
I APPRE-CIATE YOUR COOPERA-TION..
イチラ
YOU'VE DONE WELL.
NOW I CAN GUARANTEE THE SAFETY OF YOU AND YOUR DAUGHTER.
AND PLEASE, REALLY-- THERE'S NO NEED TO THANK ME.

..DON'T LET THE TORA-TSUGUMI BEWITCH YOU.
I'LL BE CAREFUL, PUMPKIN
WELL, AREN'T YOU A SWEET-HEART?
...WAS THE ONE THING I NEVER WANTED YOU TO GET MIXED UP IN.
ICHINO-MIYA...
キュッ....
THIS COMMIS-SION...
THE COMMISSION ONLY MADE HIM GO WHERE HE MUST.
IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN A SELF-EVIDENT TRUTH.

!!
WE SHOULD MAKE THAT GOON PULL IT FOR US
WHY AM I THE CORPSE LACKEY?
OR YOU COULD HELP, KANTAROU, JERK
HURRY UP WITH THE COFFIN PULLING!
HARUKA!
YOU SAID YOU'D DO THIS!
I'LL GET YOU FOR THIS!
HE'S A DEAR LIKE THAT
HE MUST BE REALLY ANXIOUS FOR YOUR SISTER'S RETURN.
STOP USING MY NAME FOR THINGS THAT HURT ME!
GRRRR
DAMN YOU, KAN-TAROU!

M-MY BELOVED LITTLE SISTER DIED RECENTLY, YOU SEE.
WHEN I HEARD THE RUMORS ABOUT THE TORATSUGUMI SOCIETY, I WAS... DESPERATE ENOUGH TO RUN FROM THE CITY.
JUST A BIT FURTHER, SIR AND YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE
I THINK I MAY JOIN HER SOON.
HUFF HUFF
I JUST NEVER REALIZED THEIR HEAD-QUARTERS WAS THIS DEEP IN THE MOUNTAINS.
DAMMIT
THAT MAKES SENSE
HUFF HUFF
OUR PRACTICES ARE CONSIDERED SOMEWHAT TABOO IN THE EYES OF SOCIETY, SO WE CAN'T CARRY THEM OUT IN PUBLIC OUR ONLY CHOICE IS TO HOLD OUR BASE AWAY FROM PRYING EYES



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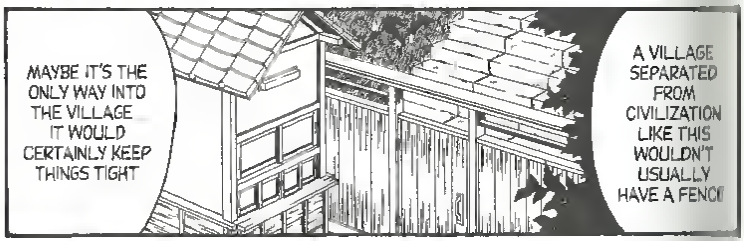
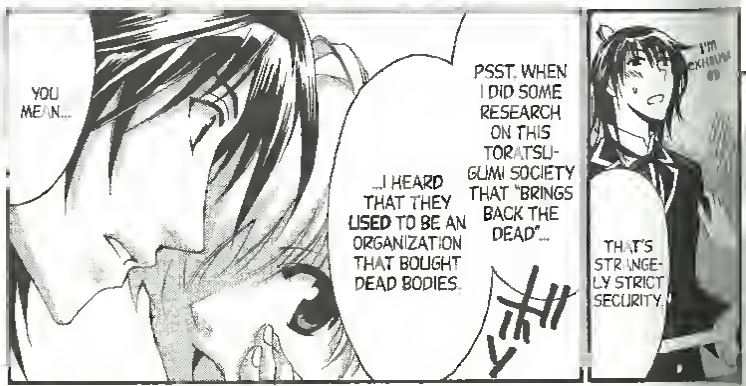
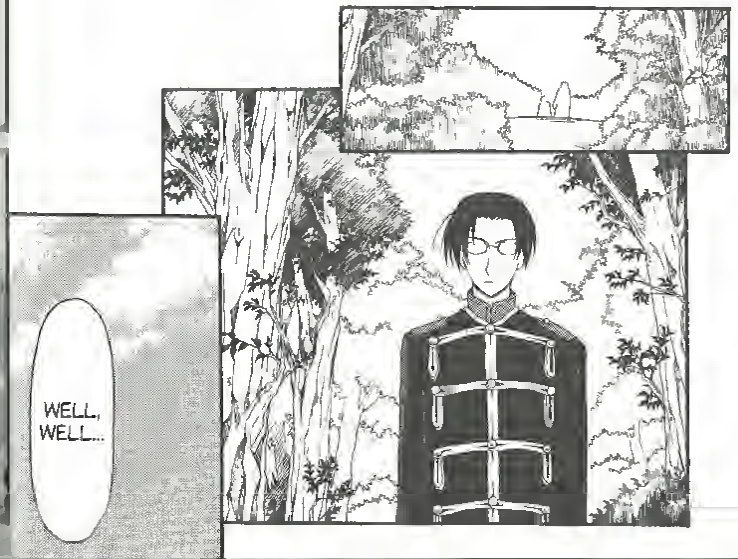
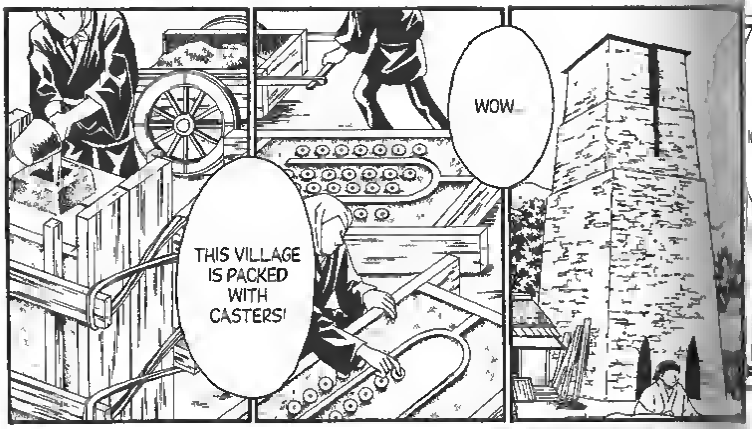

MAYBE IT'S THE ONLY WAY INTO THE VILLAGE. IT WOULD CERTAINLY KEEP THINGS TIGHT
A VILLAGE SEPARATED FROM CIVILIZATION LIKE THIS WOULDN'T USUALLY HAVE A FENCE


YOU MEAN...
...I HEARD THAT THEY USED TO BE AN ORGANIZATION THAT BOUGHT DEAD BODIES.
PSST. WHEN I DID SOME RESEARCH ON THIS TORATSUGUMI SOCIETY THAT "BRINGS BACK THE DEAD"...
I'M EXHAUSTED
THAT'S STRANGELY STRICT SECURITY.




WOW...
THIS VILLAGE IS PACKED WITH CASTERS!

THIS WAY, MISTER ICHINOMIYA.

RIGHT.
I THINK THEIR REAL GOAL IS TO ACCUMULATE DEAD BODIES, FOR SOME REASON.

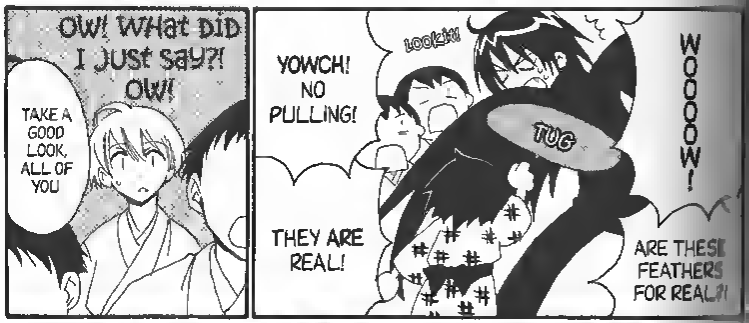
CASTERS?
CASTING IS WHEN YOU FUSE IRON, BRONZE AND OTHER METALS TO MAKE MOLDS FOR HOT LIQUID METALS. THE PEOPLE WHO MAKE THOSE ARE CALLED CASTERS.

HM. I W..S SURE THIS VILLAGE AND KENS..KU'S DISAPPEAR-ANCE WERE CONNECTED, BUT--
WHO ARE YOU TWO?

SINCE TATARA MASTERS USE IRON SAND, THEY WERE ALWAYS THOUGHT OF AS NOMADS. BUT THEIR NUMBERS ARE SO FEW THAT DETAILS ABOUT THEM ARE SCARCE.
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN TATARA MASTERS AT WORK, ACTUALLY. ♡

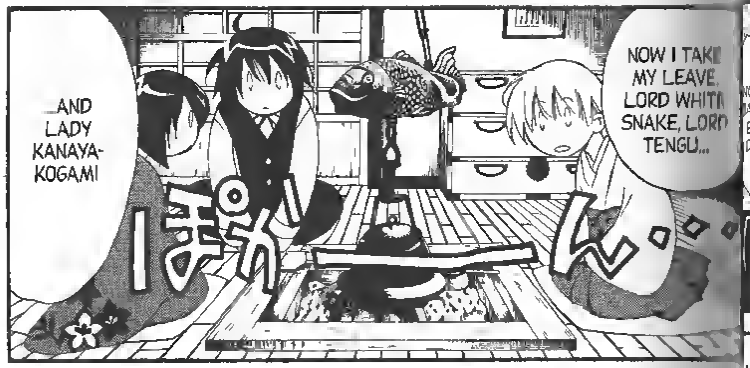
AND THERE ARE TATARA MASTERS, TOO.
TATARA IS A METHOD OF MAKING IRON
AND THESE TATARA MASTERS USE IRON SAND HEATED WITH CHARCOAL TO MAKE THE IRON WE KNOW.

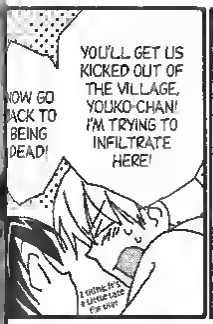
HIS EYES ARE RED!
HOW CREEPY! HA HA HA!
OOH!
AHH
..KAN TAROU?
I.. UH
HUH?
YIPE!
YOU'RE SO WHITE!
SHOULD I BEAT THEM UP, KANTAROU?
PLEASE DON'T
わらわらわら
ER.. NO ONE SUSPICIOUS HONEST
WHOA LOOK CLOSER!
UH..
HOLD ON a--
PLENTY OF PEOPLE FROM THE CITY COME TO OUR VILLAGE BUT THIS IS THE FIRST TIME WE'VE SEEN SOMEONE LIKE THIS!
AND THIS ONE'S SO TALL AND HANDSOME!
FORGET HIM THIS ONE IS SO PRETTY AND PALE!
NO ONE IN THE CITY SEEMS TO CARE THAT I'M ABNORMAL
THIS KIND OF REACTION REALLY TAKES ME BACK
I WAS BORN THIS PALE I CAN'T EXACTLY HELP IT.

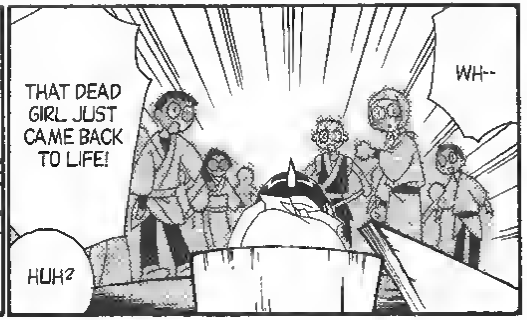

OW! WHAT DID I JUST SAY?! OW!
TAKE A GOOD LOOK, ALL OF YOU
YOWCH! NO PULLING!
LOOK!!!
TUG
THEY ARE REAL!
WOOOOW!
ARE THESE FEATHERS FOR REAL?!

HARUKA-
ARE WE CLEAR?
THIS IS CREEPY

SOME OF US ARE TRYING TO SLEEP!
EVERYBODY SHUT UP!


...AND LADY KANAYA-KOGAMI
NOW I TAKE MY LEAVE, LORD WHITE SNAKE, LORD TENGU...

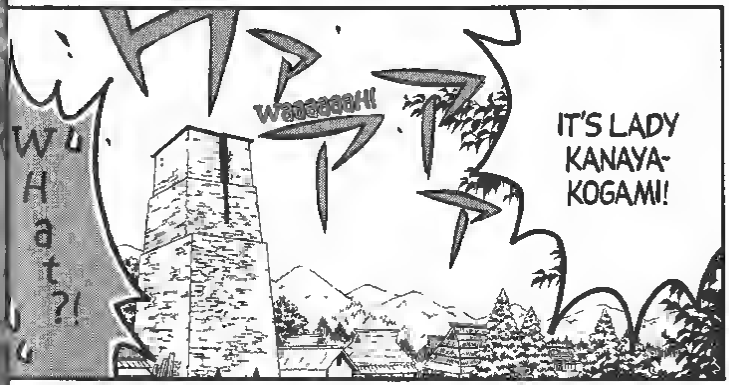

YOU'LL GET US KICKED OUT OF THE VILLAGE, YOUKO-CHAN! I'M TRYING TO INFILTRATE HERE!
NOW GO BACK TO BEING DEAD!

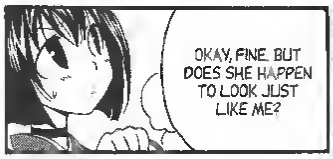

WH--
THAT DEAD GIRL JUST CAME BACK TO LIFE!
HUH?

WHO THE HELL IS THAT?!
LADY KANAYA-KOGAMI?!

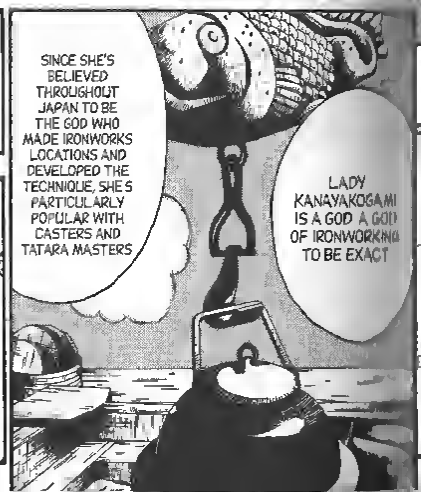
THEY HIT THE NAIL ON THE TAIL WITH ME.

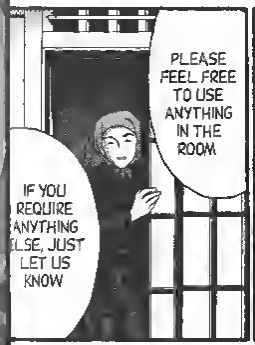
LORD WHITE SNAKE HE CALLS ME... I'VE BEEN UPGRADED TO DIVINE STATUS
HEH HEH...

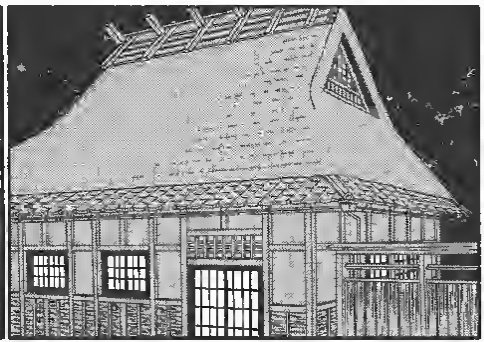

WHAT?!
WAAAAAH!!
IT'S LADY KANAYA-KOGAMI!


OKAY, FINE. BUT DOES SHE HAPPEN TO LOOK JUST LIKE ME?

HM? OH, YEAH...
THAT BIT COMES FROM THE LEGEND.


SINCE SHE'S BELIEVED THROUGHOUT JAPAN TO BE THE GOD WHO MADE IRONWORKS LOCATIONS AND DEVELOPED THE TECHNIQUE, SHE'S PARTICULARLY POPULAR WITH CASTERS AND TATARA MASTERS
LADY KANAYAKOGAMI IS A GOD. A GOD OF IRONWORKING TO BE EXACT

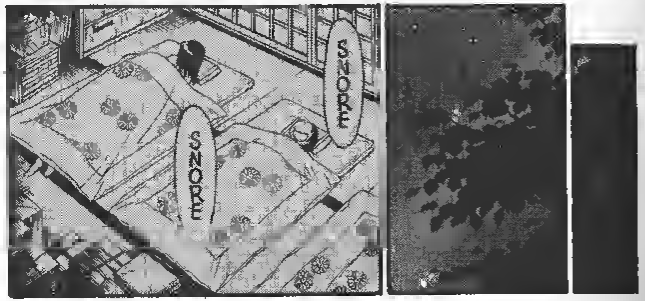

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO USE ANYTHING IN THE ROOM
IF YOU REQUIRE ANYTHING ELSE, JUST LET US KNOW

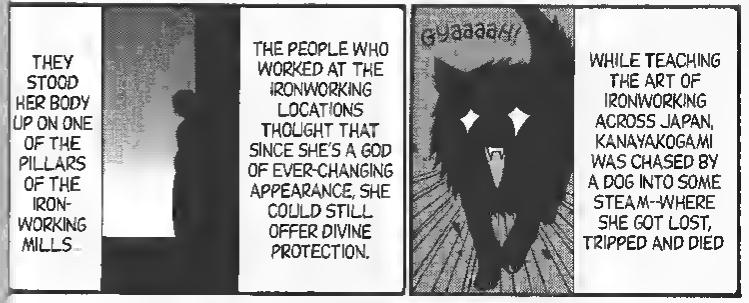


HM
THAT WOULD EXPLAIN THEM CALLING ME HOLY, TOO

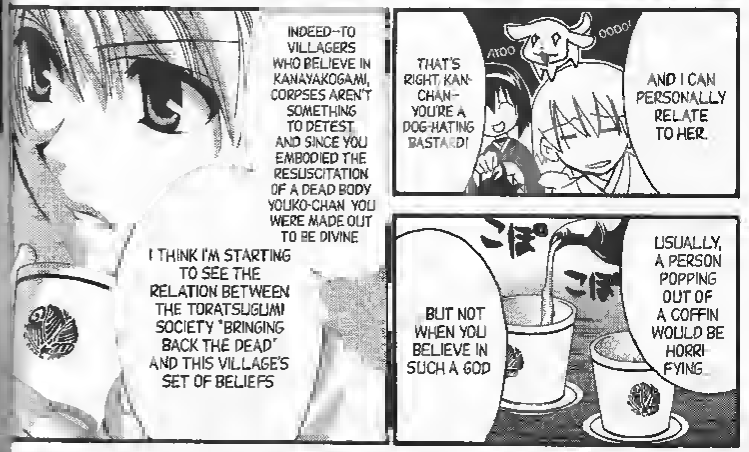
POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF THE LARGE NUMBER OF BLIND PEOPLE IN THE RELIGIONS OF JAPAN. THERE ARE CASES OF CALLING SUCH PEOPLE THE INCARNATION OF GODS. IT'S LIKE THE ORIGIN STORY OF THE ONE-EYED GOBLIN BEING A SHINTO PRIEST WHO LOST ONE EYE AND ASCENDED INTO BEING A SPIRIT
ALSO, IT SEEMS THAT THE LOCALS ARE PRETTY QUICK TO SEE STRANGERS AS HOLY.

IN ANY CASE YOUKO-CHAN BLEW THE LID ON OUR CORPSE TACTIC. WE'LL JUST SEARCH FOR KENSAKU MORE DIRECTLY TOMORROW
IT IS WEIRD
HEY!
I JUST FORGOT THAT YOU'RE A SCHOLAR AND NOT A USELESS SACK KAN CHAN
...WHY ARE YOU STARING?

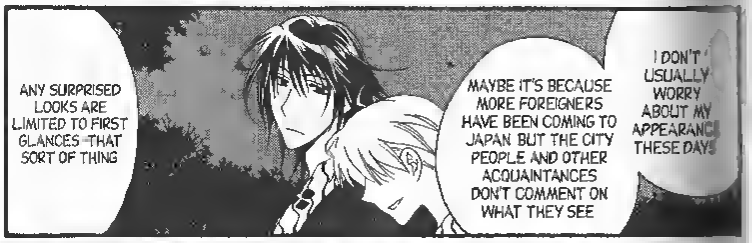

SNORE
SNORE


THEY STOOD HER BODY UP ON ONE OF THE PILLARS OF THE IRON-WORKING MILLS...
THE PEOPLE WHO WORKED AT THE IRONWORKING LOCATIONS THOUGHT THAT SINCE SHE'S A GOD OF EVER-CHANGING APPEARANCE, SHE COULD STILL OFFER DIVINE PROTECTION.
GYAAAAA!!
WHILE TEACHING THE ART OF IRONWORKING ACROSS JAPAN, KANAYAKOGAMI WAS CHASED BY A DOG INTO SOME STEAM--WHERE SHE GOT LOST, TRIPPED AND DIED

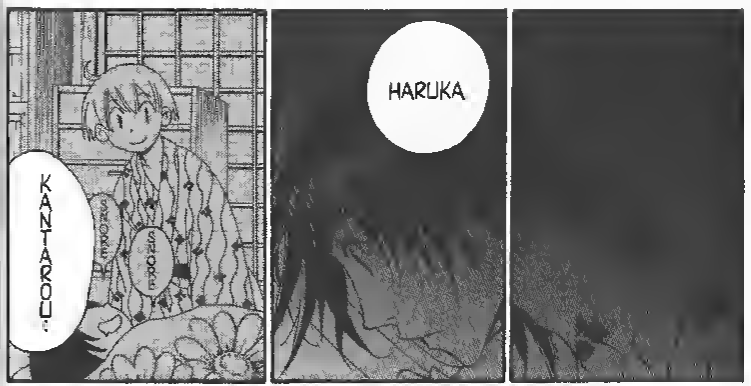
THIS LEGEND CAN BE INTERPRETED AS PROMOTING THE IDEA OF GOOD FORTUNE STEMMING FROM SOMETHING IMPURE (A CORPSE). IT'S THE PHENOMENON OF REVERSAL.
...AND THEY SAY THAT JUST LIKE WHEN SHE WAS ALIVE THE MILLS WERE BLESSED WITH PLENTIFUL IRON
Kanayakogami!


INDEED--TO VILLAGERS WHO BELIEVE IN KANAYAKOGAMI, CORPSES AREN'T SOMETHING TO DETEST. AND SINCE YOU EMBODIED THE RESUSCITATION OF A DEAD BODY YOUKO-CHAN, YOU WERE MADE OUT TO BE DIVINE
I THINK I'M STARTING TO SEE THE RELATION BETWEEN THE TORATSUGUMI SOCIETY "BRINGING BACK THE DEAD" AND THIS VILLAGE'S SET OF BELIEFS
THAT'S RIGHT, KAN-CHAN--YOU'RE A DOG-HATING BASTARD!
AND I CAN PERSONALLY RELATE TO HER.
BUT NOT WHEN YOU BELIEVE IN SUCH A GOD
USUALLY, A PERSON POPPING OUT OF A COFFIN WOULD BE HORRIFYING...

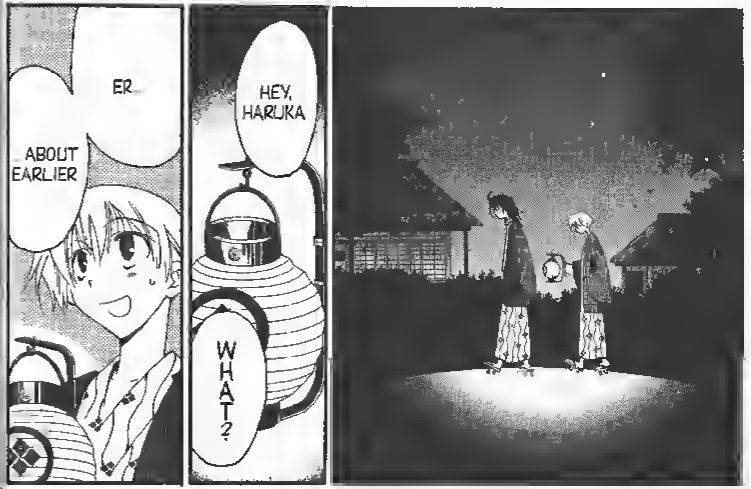
HUH?
YOU'RE EXAGGERATING
THANKS FOR COMING TO MY RESCUE.


I DON'T USUALLY WORRY ABOUT MY APPEARANCE THESE DAYS
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE MORE FOREIGNERS HAVE BEEN COMING TO JAPAN BUT THE CITY PEOPLE AND OTHER ACQUAINTANCES DON'T COMMENT ON WHAT THEY SEE
ANY SURPRISED LOOKS ARE LIMITED TO FIRST GLANCES THAT SORT OF THING

I NEVER HAD A PROBLEM WITH THE COLOR OF YOUR EYES.
YOU DON'T HAVE TO MAKE EXCUSES
HA HA HA!
SINCE THIS VILLAGE IS SO BACKWATER EVERYONE MADE AN UNUSUALLY BIG DEAL OUT OF IT.


KANTAROU.
SNORE
HARUKA

WANT TO WALK AND TALK?
IT'S TOO EARLY TO GO TO BED YET.


ER... ABOUT EARLIER
HEY, HARUKA
WHAT?

HUNH. BUT THE THING I ACTUALLY WANTED TO ASK HIM ABOUT...
...WAS WHAT HAPPENED THAT DAY WE HAD ALL THAT RAIN

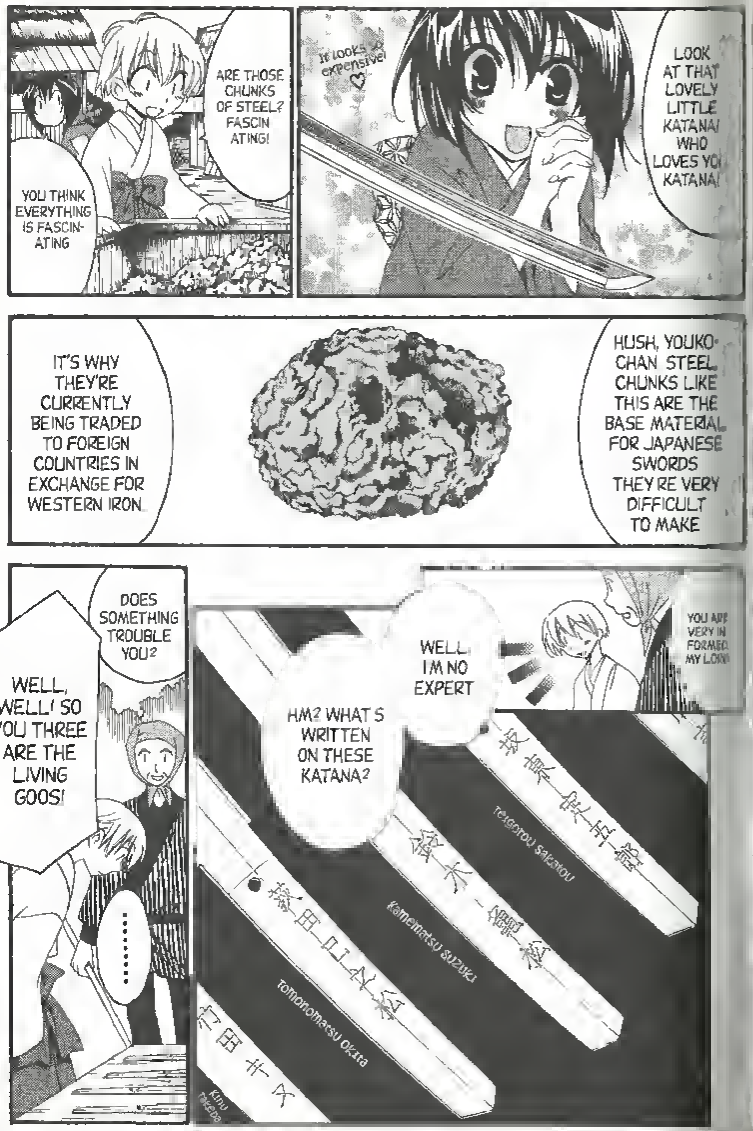
HARUKA, THAT LINE JUST TINGLED UP MY SPINE.
?
...WHAT'S THE MATTER?

THEY REMIND ME OF MARBLES.
I WISH I COULD HAVE THEM.

HM. MAYBE I'VE GROWN TO LIKE IT, TOO
THE COLOR OF MY EYES, I MEAN.

.....
WHAT IS IT?

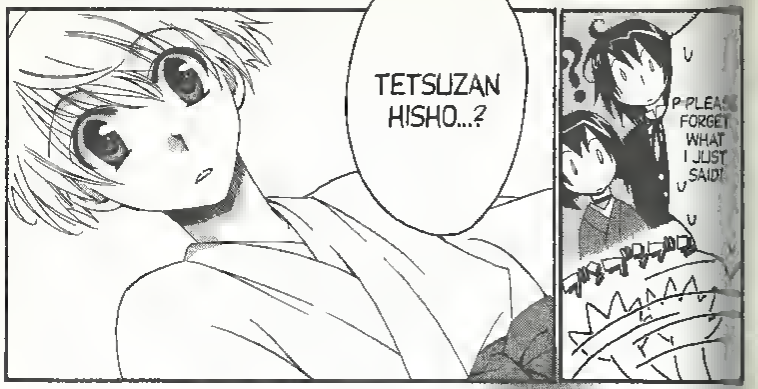
IT WASN'T FAST, HARUKA— I'VE BEEN DWELLING! DWELLING!
I THOUGHT YOU HATED YOUR EYES.
YOU JUST CHANGED YOUR OPINION PRETTY FAST.


ARE THOSE CHUNKS OF STEEL? FASCIN ATING!
YOU THINK EVERYTHING IS FASCIN-ATING
It looks so expensive!
LOOK AT THAT LOVELY LITTLE KATANA! WHO LOVES YOU KATANA!
IT'S WHY THEY'RE CURRENTLY BEING TRADED TO FOREIGN COUNTRIES IN EXCHANGE FOR WESTERN IRON.
HUSH, YOUKO-CHAN. STEEL CHUNKS LIKE THIS ARE THE BASE MATERIAL FOR JAPANESE SWORDS. THEY'RE VERY DIFFICULT TO MAKE.
DOES SOMETHING TROUBLE YOU?
WELL, WELL! SO YOU THREE ARE THE LIVING GOOS!
.....
HM? WHAT'S WRITTEN ON THESE KATANA?
WELL... I'M NO EXPERT
YOU ARE VERY INFORMED, MY LORD!
TOSHIROU SAIJOU
KAMEMATSU SUZUKI
TOMOMATSU OZAWA
KINU HAZAMA

GOOD MORNING!
GOOD MORNING LADY KANAYA-KOGAMI, LORD WHITE SNAKE AND LORD TENGU!
MAN, KAN-CHAN... THIS PLACE SEEMS REALLY NORMAL.
IS THIS REALLY WHERE THEY BRING BACK THE DEAD?
MORNING!
I'M NOT SURE. THEY DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ANY SORCERERS OF THAT NATURE - AND I HAVEN'T NOTICED ANY DOLL-MAKING.
I WAS EXPECTING A MORE FANATIC GROUP, NOT A CALM VILLAGE OF IRONWORKERS
OH, HOW DARLING!
AT ANY RATE, LET'S FOCUS ON OUR PRIMARY GOAL-- RETRIEVING THE MISSING KENSAKU
WE'LL START WITH RECONNAIS SANCE WORK.

NOW I WANT YOU EVEN MORE. ☆
A WAITRESS?!
NO, NO. I WANT YOU. ☆
YOUR WIFE IS RIGHT THERE! DO YOU WANT ME TO CALL HER OVER?!
WHOA, BUDDY! YOU DON'T WANT ME-- YOU WANT TO NAIL THE CITY!
THE CITY'S SPOTLESS AND FULL OF HOT BABES, RIGHT?
A WAITRESS IN THE CITY MUST BE THE HEIGHT OF STYLE!
GaaaaH!
THAT DOES IT!
WE HAVE TO GO DO ANYTHING BUT THIS NOW!
AH!
WHAT-EVER GETS HER OFF ME.
WHISH
Yeah!
Well, rubber and glue!
Oh, yeah?!

.....
I MUST SAY, YOU'RE A SHADY GROUP IF I EVER DID SEE ONE!
IRK
WELCOME! I'M THE VILLAGE HEADMAN, MURATA
BEHIND ME ARE MY SON SHOUSUKE AND HIS WIFE, UM!
WHY, THANK YOU! WE'RE WHITE SNAKE THE TENGU AND KANAYA KOGAMI!
IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S TRYING TO HIDE HIS IDENTITY
MAYBE IT'S SELF-LOATHING!
Ha Ha Ha!
AND OUR SHADINESS PALES IN COMPARISON TO YOURS GOOD SIR!
WOW THAT'S THE RUDEST POSSIBLE THING TO COME OUT AND ASK ME THOSE TWO ARE MY FAMILY AND MY DAY JOB IS WAITING TABLES BIG GUY
AND WHAT DO YOU WORK AS IN THE CITY? ARE THESE GUYS YOUR YOU-KNOW WHAT?
POINT
ME? YEAH.
HEY LITTLE LADY DID YOU COME FROM THE CITY TOO?

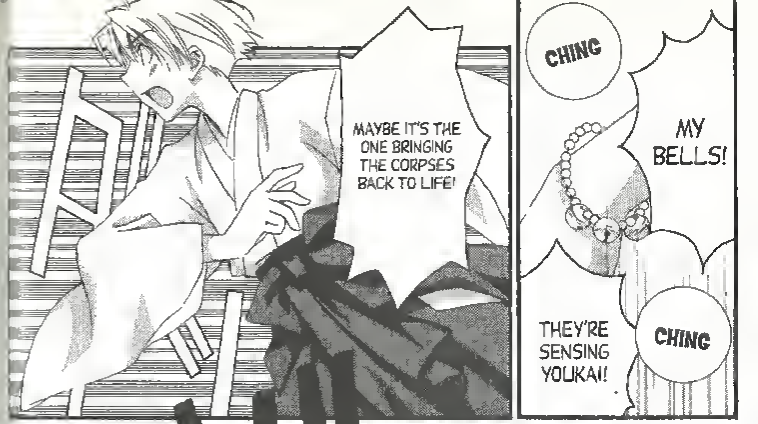

TETSUZAN HISHO...?
P-PLEASE FORGET WHAT I JUST SAID!

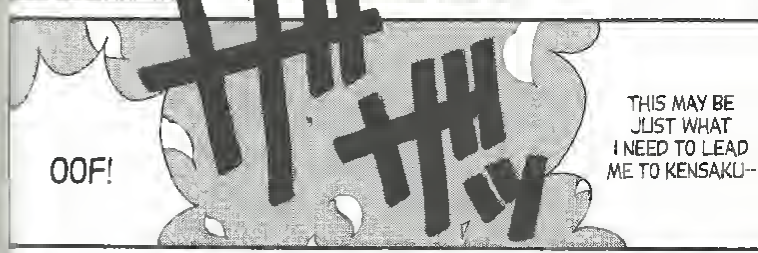
NOT TO SPEAK ILL OF OTHERS
BUT YOU'RE PROBABLY BETTER OFF STAYING AWAY FROM THOSE THREE
AND WHY IS THAT? I can probably guess, but still...
MY LORDS...
WHAT WAS WRONG WITH THOSE COMPLETE PINHEADS?!

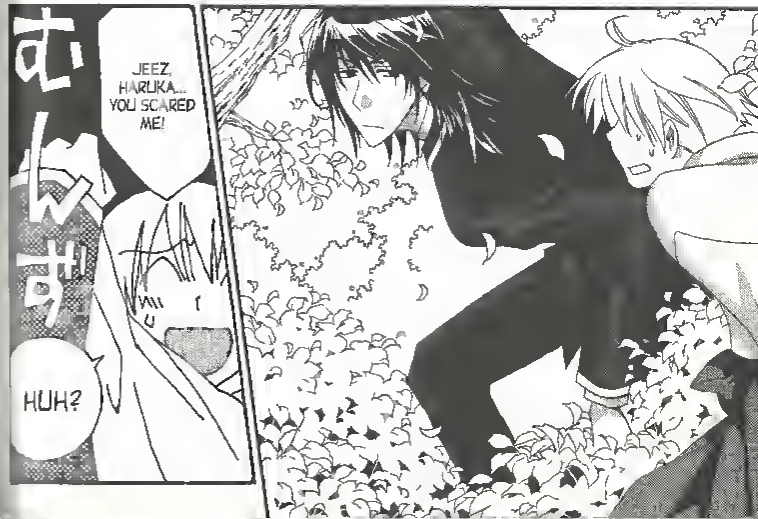
THEN WHY IS HE THE HEAD OF THE VILLAGE?
THOSE PEOPLE HAVE NO PRIDE FOR TATARA, NOR CASTING.
THEY'RE LOWLY FOLK WHO ONLY KNOW HOW TO SWAGGER. EVERYONE DESPISES THEM.
IT'S BECAUSE HE INHERITED THE TETSUZAN HISHO--
HEY! DON'T SAY THINGS YOU'RE NOT ENTITLED TO SAY!

AND SINCE YOUKO-CHAN'S COME BACK TO LIFE, THERE GOES THAT PLAN. I JUST WISH THE VILLAGERS WERE MORE WILLING TO TELL ME ABOUT THE HEADQUARTERS ITSELF...
CHING
IT WON'T BE EASY FOR AN OUTSIDER LIKE ME TO GET IN
BASED ON WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING THE TORATSUGUMI SOCIETY HO SEEMS TO HAVE EVERY LOCAL FACE MEMORIZED
THANK YOU VERY MUCH!
PHEW! I'M BEAT! I WONDER IF THE OTHER TWO ARE STILL GOING AT IT.

IT'LL BE FASTER TO FLY.
THERE!
CHING
CHING
I THINK IT'S COMING FROM AROUND HERE

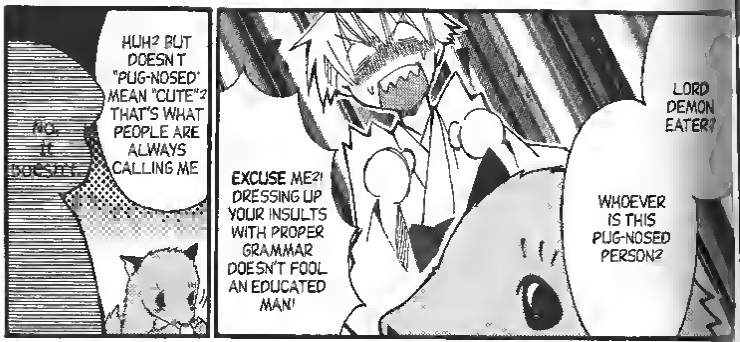

MAYBE IT'S THE ONE BRINGING THE CORPSES BACK TO LIFE!
CHING
MY BELLS!
THEY'RE SENSING YOUKAI!
CHING

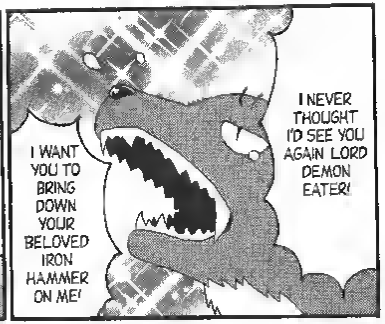

OOF!
THIS MAY BE JUST WHAT I NEED TO LEAD ME TO KENSAKU--


JEEZ, HARUKA... YOU SCARED ME!
HUH?

HARUKA?
IT'S...IT'S YOU!
HARUKA, WHO SHOT THAT IF YOU DIDN'T
L--
L--
WHAT THE HELL?!
LORD DEMON EATER!

!!
WHA...
LIGHT-NING?


HUH? BUT DOESN'T "PUG-NOSED" MEAN "CUTE"? THAT'S WHAT PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS CALLING ME
NO, IT DOESN'T.
EXCUSE ME?! DRESSING UP YOUR INSULTS WITH PROPER GRAMMAR DOESN'T FOOL AN EDUCATED MAN!
LORD DEMON EATER?
WHOEVER IS THIS PUG-NOSED PERSON?



SORRY FOR WORRYING YOU.
He'd forgotten until Sugino mentioned them
YOU KNOW-THOSE GUYS THE ONES WHO ALWAYS PLAY WITH US!
YOUR GRAY AND BROWN ESCORT GUYS!
UM.
RIGHT.

CALL US RAIJUU!*
ATTEN-DANTS?! HARUKA, SINCE WHEN ARE YOU IN THE BOURGEOIS CLASS?!
WE ARE LORD DEMON EATER'S ATTEN-DANTS!
ARE THESE FRIENDS OF YOURS, HARUKA?
UH...
SURE. THESE ARE...UH...

*Mythological beasts that descend from the sky with a thunderbolt.

ACK!
YOU FILTHY THING!
DON'T TOUCH ME!
BUT...
THEY HAVE NAMES...DID YOU SUB-ORDINATE THEM?!
SHOUSUKE?!
WE'RE SORRY, MASTER!
QUIT MESSING AROUND!
STAR! MOON!
KEEP IT TOGETHER, HARUKA! DON'T GO BALLISTIC ON ME!
HE... HE CALLED A YOUKAI FILTHY!
FILTHY...!
HUH? OH IT'S YOU GUYS OUTSIDERS AREN'T ALLOWED HERE, SO SCRAM
SHOUSUKE, SIR YOU DON'T HAVE ANY MYSTIC POWERS!
BUT MASTER! WE HAVEN'T FINISHED TODAY'S QUOTA--
THAT DOES IT--NOW I'M PISSED! THE REST OF TODAY IS CANCELLED!
THAT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS.
HOW DID YOU NAME THOSE YOUKAI IF YOU'RE NOT A MYSTIC?

ALL RIGHT.
.....
THREE BODIES. AND THANK YOU FOR HANDLING THEM.
LEND YOUR EARS TO MY VOICE..
ANSWER MY VOICE..
I...
IT'S TIME.
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?
THE YOUKAI
?
DID YOU SAY SOMETHING?
NEVER MIND WHAT DO WE HAVE TODAY?

...AM THE ONE WHO CALLS THE SOULS.
I AM TSUGUMI.

I'D LOVE TO MEET THE LEGENDARY DEMON-EATING TENGU.
YES, I'VE HEARD OF HIM.
I'M SURE HE'S A LOT LIKE ME.
WHICH MEANS HE MUST BE WRETCHED

I AM TSUGUMI.
...AM THE ONE WHO CALLS THE SOULS.